

Paquito D'Rivera, Cyrus Chestnut, Benny Golson, George Duke, Eric Reed, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Roy Hargrove, and Mulgrew Miller, to name a few. State of Art signaled Williams' emergence as a prominent voice in the greater jazz community.

Ben's warm, woody tone, flowing groove, melodic phrasing, and storytelling approach has found favor among not just musicians, but also a larger audience. A bandleader, musical educator, composer, and electric and acoustic bassist, Ben was the winner of the 2009 Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Competition, a prestigious and important award that has propelled many a promising career. Working with New York's finest jazz musicians even before graduating from Juilliard, Williams showcased his band, Sound Effect, at The Jazz Gallery in New York, receiving an enthusiastic New York Times review. Writer Nate Chinen stated, "Williams took several long solos in his first set at The Jazz Gallery . . . and each one felt more like an entitlement than an indulgence." Williams has recorded and performed regularly as a member of bands led by saxophonist Marcus Strickland, pianist Jacky Terrasson, and vibraphonist Stefon Harris. He has led his own groups at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Harlem Stage, Rubin Museum of Art, Tribeca PAC in New York City, and SPAC in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Growing up in a family of musicians, visual artists, and rappers, young Ben Williams didn't plan on being a bassist and band leader. He wanted to be a rock star. His heroes were Prince and Michael Jackson, not Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus. Once again, a chance meeting altered his future.

"I'd been playing piano by ear, but I wanted to play guitar," Williams recalls. "My middle school offered a strings class where figured I could learn guitar. Then I got there and it was all violins and cellos—no guitars. So I choose the coolest instrument I saw, the bass. It just looked right."

Williams was a natural. He excelled on both bass and piano, and once enrolled at the Duke Ellington High School of the Arts, he became a star student, performing in jazz band, gospel choir, and orchestra, as well as extracurricular gigs. Williams graduated with honors and with a Best in Instrumental Music Award. He won scholarships from the Fish Middleton Scholarship Competition of the East Coast Jazz Festival, the International Society of Bassists' Competition, the Steans Music Institute, the Duke Ellington Jazz Society, the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE), and the DC Public Schools City-Wide Annual Piano Competition. Williams received his Bachelor's in Music Education at Michigan State University in 2007, and his Master's in Music from the Juilliard School in 2009.

"In high school I dedicated myself to the bass and to jazz," Williams says. "I knew this could be a profession, and if I could do what I love for a living—man, what is better than that? You always feel like a student playing jazz, there is so much to learn. There's never a point where you think you've arrived. I am trying to get better every day. Even Roy Haynes, when you see him play you get a sense that he is still trying to find new things."

Like many self-aware jazz musicians, Ben Williams has several influences, from "Wayne Shorter, Stevie Wonder and Duke Ellington" to "hip-hop and gospel, Little Dragon, Billy Joel,

Marvin Gaye." And like his colleagues in the new guard of jazz, Williams is constantly looking ahead, seeking the music's potential and his place in it.

"I've worked with Stefon Harris' Blackout for the past few years," Williams cites. "He has definitely been a huge influence in my concept of playing music. We have a similar viewpoint to music and jazz. He's very much about addressing modern times and not rehashing old material. To really interpret what is happening right now, a lot of jazz musicians are into hip-hop and R&B, but they don't put that into their music. We keep up with the times and we're not afraid to put that into our music."

To other musician's music Williams brings his great natural skill and determination to explore, to expand boundaries while sustaining tradition. State of Art is a mature statement stamped with his voice, the next step in Ben Williams' evolution.

"I wanted to make an album that regular nine-to-five people could enjoy," Williams says; "and to make a deep artistic statement as well. I like music that grooves, and I make sure that my music feels good."

"I always bring a certain energy to whatever the musical situation is," the soft-spoken musician adds. "I try to be a team player and be supportive, but also, I try to add my voice to the situation. It's a fine balance between putting your stamp on things and being supportive. I've found that balance pretty well."

"The diversity of my musical upbringing has allowed me to be comfortable in many different musical situations. I don't try to sound like anyone else, I just try to be honest musically and bring a youthful spirit."

Mr. Speaker, Ben Williams is an accomplished young artist and band leader that has made a lasting impression on jazz as an art and as a field. Ben Williams has become a national jazz treasure of international acclaim, and I urge all Members to join me in commending him for his magnificent contributions.

HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MERIDEN YMCA

HON. ELIZABETH H. ESTY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the 150th Anniversary of the YMCA in Meriden, Connecticut. For the past century and a half, this community institution and its dedicated leaders have brought together our neighbors to help those in need and create a shared space for our town to learn, play, and healthy lives.

Today, the Meriden YMCA is one of the most active organizations in the City of Meriden. It sponsors community events, for important causes from promoting physical fitness to raising awareness about issues affecting Meriden. The YMCA also brings together seniors in our community to offer them resources to lead active lives and share community space.

The YMCA is critical to helping and educating children in Meriden. It offers them a safe place to be active, learn, and form friendships, often with opportunities such as summer camps or trips in New England that broaden children's educational experience.

Mr. Speaker, the Meriden YMCA has been serving our community and addressing the

needs of some of our most vulnerable neighbors for a century and a half. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that we honor the Meriden YMCA, and all the community leaders who have contributed to its success, here today.

RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATED SERVICE AND OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JOANNE SHERIDAN

HON. MIKE JOHNSON

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a member from my home state, Major General Joanne Sheridan, for her steadfast service to the safety and security of the people of Louisiana in the Louisiana National Guard. Five years ago, Major General Sheridan became the first female general in the Louisiana National Guard, and today, I would like to commend her for raising the bar again and becoming the first female Two-Star General in the Louisiana National Guard.

Originally from Maine, Major General Sheridan moved to Leesville, La., when the Army stationed her father, Command Sergeant Major Joe S. Fernald, at Fort Polk. There, she attended Leesville High School and went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts Degree in sociology at Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, La., where she received her commission through Reserve Officer Training Corps in May 1983. Later, she received a master's degree in strategic studies from the prestigious U.S. Army War College.

A true soldier to her community and country, Major General Sheridan began her impressive military career as an active duty service member in the U.S. Army in February 1984, at Fort Polk Army Base. Throughout her 33-year career, in both her active duty and National Guard service, her leadership has earned her the respect of her peers and included many major accomplishments. She became the first female to command a battalion leading the 41th Military Intelligence Battalion, Commander of the 199th Regiment Regional Training Institute, and the first female to helm a major command when she led the 61st Troop Command. Currently, she serves as the Assistant General for the Louisiana National Guard and is responsible as the principal military advisor to the Adjunct General in assisting in the deployment and coordination of programs, policies and plans for the Louisiana Army and Air National Guard.

The National Guard is unique in defending Louisiana both at home and abroad. Major General Sheridan served as a citizen soldier through Hurricane Katrina, was deployed to Baghdad in support of Operation Iraq Freedom in 2008, and led rescue and recovery efforts in the historic Louisiana flooding of 2016. She previously served as president of the National Guard Association of Louisiana and now serves as secretary of the National Guard Association of the U.S. Her dedication to the National Guard extends past what is required. Twice, Major General Sheridan has battled breast cancer and with her last round of treatment in August, has again won the battle. Her incredible strength and courage serve as a beacon of hope for others.